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ABSTRACT

Creative teaching, which involves creating innovative lessons, games, materials, and assignments to challenge students, can be stimulated in teacher education students by stirring up their thinking and encouraging them to explore different paths. Two thematic concepts which underlie creative teaching are "reflective teaching" which attempts to guide the development of thinking professionals who continually reflect upon their teaching, and "lateral thinking" which advocates moving from side to side when dealing with any problem and digging new holes rather than digging deeper and deeper into the same hole. Both theories may be used by teaching methods classes to engender professionals who are reflexive and flexible. Two techniques which have proved effective in methods classes are: (1) to pass out a collection of "junk mail" to teacher education students and ask them to build a lesson concept from it, and (2) to use word games which require students to develop creative definitions for a list of words. (A copy of the word game "Pun Fun" which includes a scoring guide to evaluate creativity is attached.) (NH)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PREPARING TEACHERS THROUGH CREATIVITY GAMES*

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Should teachers be clever, creative or just plain crazy?

To anyone who has ever taught in grades K-12 my question will not seem all that strange. I'm sure many elementary, high school and even college teachers can attest to the need for the **Three C's** as coping or survival mechanisms. Many have wondered aloud about the sanity of anyone who would willingly walk into a classroom full of untamed children or youths. You have to be a little **crazy** to be a teacher anyway.

But this is not the kind of crazy I am talking about. The Three C's in the opening question are to be regarded as degrees of inventiveness (or entrepreneurship) in the process of instructing. **Cleverness** is a low level, mildly inventive teaching while **Craziness** is the highest degree involving wildly bizarre, or off-the-wall kinds of teaching ideas and behaviors. A teacher needs to be CLEVER at certain unexpected moments whether a quick retort to a student wisecrack of the invention of an acronym as a learning mnemonic (such as TEACH for Take Each And Create Hope). The second level of creativity is the devising of new, different and interesting ways of approaching the same old ideas. This means the CREATION of innovative lessons, games, exercises, materials, and assignments which challenge your students. The third level may not be for the timid or those who prize total predictability and security. Here you must be a little wild and CRAZY, willing to go out on a limb with the

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untried, to take risks that the lesson may misfire or fail (but without you being fired and the students failing). Here you must have the courage to do the unexpected and try new things which may initially seem puzzling or downright bizarre. *My contention is that all would be (neophyte) teachers must be prepared to be inventive in finding their own way within changing situations, student needs, and district demands.* Often we must cope with limited resources to make the most of what we have. However, developing creative teachers is not just giving them survival skills. It also helps to keep the joy and excitement of teaching fresh--for teacher if not for students--for over 25-30 years.

The three dimensional Confluent Taxonomy of Learning (Feezel, 1985), developed as a departure from the Bloom, Krathwohl, and others schemas, made the sixth and highest level of the cognitive/affective mental dimension Synthesis. Recently, upon consulting my computer thessaurus for "synthesis" I found the following synonyms:

SYNTHESIS -- blend, combination, composite, compound, fusion, mixture, creation, formation

From this it should be evident that creativity is only one type of synthesis, but one which may be the highest type of the highest level of thinking/feeling. Therefore, it may also be the highest level of teaching ability and one not easily attained. But, I believe that creative teaching can be stimulated in teacher education students by stirring up their thinking and encouraging them to explore different paths.

The foundation theories (or theoretical concepts at least) of the approach to the training of teachers which I am advocating are two. First, the concept of **reflective teaching** has become widely used in teacher training (although the word "training" does not really fit with the concept of reflection). Reflective teaching attempts to guide the development of thinking professionals who continually reflect upon their teaching--before, during and after each class session (Cruickshank, 1987).

The second foundation theory is **lateral thinking**, a concept of creativity in dealing with any problem, which was developed by Edward De Bono in 1968. In simple form, this means tackling each problem not by just digging a deeper and deeper hole in the same place, but moving from side to side and constantly digging new holes. This metaphor gives the name to lateral thinking as a different approach to creative problem solving which has spawned many other applications, from '68 to the presentday. Some of De Bono's very recent books relate to lateral thinking applications in businesses.

Both theories may be used by teaching methods classes to engender professionals who are reflective and flexible, who are constantly challenging themselves and their students to "dig new holes." Techniques that help teachers in development to unleash their own creative powers should be employed by teacher educators. A couple such techniques have been used effectively in methods classes.

A creative teaching idea: Recycled Junk Mail

What to do with all those unwanted, unsolicited "buy this or that" mailings we daily receive. They clutter up the mailbox and then, shortly thereafter, your waste bin -- eventually filling the landfills. Well teachers, strike a blow for the environment and create challenging fun for your students at the same time.

Pass out a collection of this "junk mail" (as I do) and have your teacher education students select something and find a way to build a lesson on a concept from it. I have kept various envelopes of materials received in a large file-type expandable envelope labelled "Creative Teaching Junk Kit." Included are sets of stamps for magazines, books, videos, tapes, and CDs; removable stickers and labels; gimmick items like fake keys, money, awards, certificates; the persuasive appeal letters; the flyers with colorful pictures and the "you may have already won" come-on; a variety of envelope types and sizes; and even the often enclosed desperate last appeal letters ("open and read this before you pitch us"). This Kit is passed around the class with the instructions:

> Reach in without looking and pull out an envelope. Then look through the contents and decide how you could use this junk mail item to devise a learning game, exercise, assignment, or lesson. Tell me your objective for it and how it might fit into a unit of your Speech, Drama or English class.

Many surprising and exciting teaching ideas have sprung up from

this collection of "junk." Some students even surprised themselves with their own creativity. One student used a sweepstakes entry packet as stimulus for four activities:

1) Role-play Ed McMahon explaining entry rules & regulations
2) Role-play a sweepstakes winner
3) Duet acting of McMahon giving check to a winner
4) Speech on why/why not enter more sweepstakes.

Another used (a) a form letter on ordering Wall Street Journal for students to order a sample issue to read for career options and job hunting, and (b) colorful stamps of prizes to be given students for ideas from the WSJ presented effectively to the class.

A third student used a sheet of stamps of various VHS movies in a variant on charades. They were torn apart and put in a hat for each student to draw a movie title to act out nonverbally.

> The stamps eliminated the time consuming steps of each one deciding what to enact and then having to convey the category (as all were contemporary films on videotape). So the game would move more quickly and all students might get a chance to draw and perform.

Colorful and appealing learning materials can be made from the various stickers, fake bills, flyers, certificates, etc. At the very least, such resources are within the limited budgets of a teacher's salary. This activity will challenge prospective teachers' creativity (although it is probably a good example of the Crazy or off-the-wall level noted above).

Word games for creative teachers

For less crazy but creative teaching, you might try Bill Gorden's "Pun Fun" (attached) or the "Means-To-Me Game" (Feezel, 1982, especially the acronym phase). Note that "Pun Fun" even suggests a way of assessing or scoring creative word responses; how to evaluate or grade creativity has often been viewed as a problem, but one approach is offered here if a teacher needs to use it for accountability. All three techniques can cause future teachers to open their minds to the endless possibilities of new and different lessons around them. Then they may see that lively and fresh teaching goes beyond the limits of the Three R's. It requires a willingness to venture into the realm of the Three C's as well.

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*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Joint Conference of CSCA and SSCA, Lexington, April 1993.

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PUN-FUN*

INSTRUCTIONS: Create a non-dictionary definition (or a daffy-nition) for the following words. More than one definition is permitted.

1. Bulldozer Example, a sleeping animal
2. Abuse
3. Jargon
4. Illegal
5. Parole
6. Kidnap
7. Curtail
8. Kindred
9. Ferocity
10. Overtired

(add any you can think of)

SCORING: Do not read until after you complete the list of puns.

A) Any correct response that occurred less than 10% of the time will be starred as unique.

B) The simplest possible manipulation of a word to achieve a pun is a one-syllable redefinition; e.g., overtired--a car with seven tires. A syllable restructuring is more difficult; e.g., overtired--"out-wardly angry." Here the syllables were changed to OVERT IRED.

C) Yet another way to make a pun is by modified syllable pronunciation. This is more difficult; e.g., ferocity--Egyptian place where the Pharoahs reside.

Answers which fall into either A, B, or C should be starred as unique.

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*Based on Marvin Kerlin's, "A Note on a New Test of Creativity," Journal of Creative Behavior, Vol. 6 (Second Quarter, 1972) p. 95-101, as developed by William Gorden, Kent State University.